

This statement represents the following co-signers made up of staff from Achievement First Amistad High School. We are making this statement together as a sign of our coming together to address the challenges that we face as a community and of our commitment to our scholars and families.

- First and foremost, we have been processing the events of the past two weeks. The large majority of the staff was unaware of the incident shared in the video. Candidly, we could speak at length about our shock and horror, however we want to focus instead on how we believe as a staff that this one incident is representative of the systematic racial inequities that are observable throughout the network.
- For the past five days, we as a team have been working and will continue to work on how to address our school culture in policy and in philosophy. We have been discussing the implications of our discipline system through a lens of racial equity and planning how to involve our scholars and families in the development and implementation of a new and healthier framework for our school culture. It is essential to us as educators that all stakeholders in our community have a voice in this process.
- Our days have been long, thoughtful and productive, and they are worth it because we care deeply about our scholars and the future of our school.
  - We want to address our most pressing and immediate concerns with you. They are:
    - Disgust and disappointment at the lack of transparency and lack of appropriate response at the Network level to the incident that occurred.
    - The long-term lack of communication about plans for our school leadership for the 2019-2020 school year. At no point were we included in discussions about the departure of our principal nor any step of the selection process of a new principal.

- We also believe that a lot of what has unfolded in the past week is a symptom of a much larger Achievement First challenge. Many of the systems in Achievement First schools feel oppressive to the students in our care, and it is critical that we use this opportunity to examine the entirety of our model with an antiracist focus.

We come before you today to ask you for a few commitments to us all as a community.

- Our most immediate need is for an interim school leader to guide us through these next critical weeks. We are here to endorse the current recommendation for Interim School Principal, Emery Sykes. As a staff member for more than 12 years, we believe that Emery has the firsthand knowledge of our school - scholars, families, and staff - that is crucial to our success as we both continue to educate the scholars in our care and plan to make the changes we need to be a better school. Having led our school as a Dean for the last 6 years, she has demonstrated her positive leadership capability, as well as her commitment to growth. We stand unequivocally behind Emery as our choice for Interim School Principal.
- Moving forward we insist that we be included in the selection of our 2019-2020 principal. We look forward to engaging more with you on what this process will look like and to seeing the formal plan from the Network to involve us in this decision. We are asking the Network to provide us with a proposed plan in the next thirty days.
- We endorse the hiring of an outside organization to conduct an investigation into the practices of our Network.
  - We believe as a staff that this one incident is representative of the systemic and systematic racial inequities that are observable throughout the network.
  - We hope that the scope of this investigation will be as wide as possible to include not just the errors related to this one

incident but to the systems and organizational culture that made this incident possible in the first place.

- We hope that this outside organization looks at our policies through an anti-racist lens and suggests structural changes that we can implement to address racial inequity in our schools.
  - We also ask that the results of this investigation be made publicly available. It is time for accountability across all levels of the Network, and we cannot achieve this without an honest and transparent process to evaluate the mistakes that were made and the problems these represent throughout our network.
  - We request that this outside organization identify a clear process and policy for reporting and following up on concerning behaviors from school and network leaders in a form that protects the anonymity of the reporter and can be followed to see the progress of reports. An outside HR organization might be best suited for this process. At a minimum the process needs to be clearly outlined for all AF staff.
- We request and look forward to more time with you as our governing board to continue to process with you what we, as experts in our school, feel we need as a school to be the best. This takes time, and we want to do it intentionally.
    - We plan to come back to you in 30 days with a formal proposal regarding more of the needs of our school.
    - We would like to involve the incoming principal, whoever that might be, and - of course - interested scholars and families.

Thank you for hearing us this evening. This conversation is the first step and we look forward to continuing to engage with you. We as a staff are committed to our school our community and above all our students.

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